



U.S. Department of Justice

Ronald C. Machen Jr.
*United States Attorney for the
District of Columbia*

*Judiciary Center
555 Fourth St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530*

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, October 14, 2010

For Information Contact:

Public Affairs

(202) 514-6933

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**Maryland Woman Sentenced to 32 Months in Prison For Wrongfully
Obtaining More than \$350,000 From Non-profit Organization
- Used Money For Gambling, Other Personal Expenses -**

WASHINGTON - Vonda L. Burns, 45, was sentenced today to 32 months in prison for wrongfully obtaining more than \$350,000 over a 3 ½ year period through fraudulent checks and debit transactions drawn against her former employer, the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium (NAEPDC), a non-profit organization, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr., Jeffrey W. Irvine, Special Agent in Charge, Washington Field Office, U.S. Secret Service, and Cathy L. Lanier, Chief, Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), announced.

Burns, of Laurel, Md., used the money for personal expenses. She pled guilty earlier this year to wire fraud for this offense. Today she was sentenced by the Honorable Ellen S. Huvelle, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, to the prison term, which is to be followed by three years of supervised release. The judge also ordered Burns to make full restitution.

Judge Huvelle upwardly departed from the sentence called for by the sentencing guidelines in order to run this sentence concurrently with another sentence a Maryland state court recently imposed on the defendant for a separate embezzlement matter. Burns's conviction in this case is her third for embezzling money from an employer.

NAEPDC is a non-profit service and advocacy organization headquartered in the District of Columbia which seeks to advance state adult education programs. NAEPDC had a Non-Profit checking account, and the signature card authorized the organization's Treasurer and Executive Director to sign on behalf of the non-profit for transactions to and from that account.

According to the government's evidence, Burns was an Executive Assistant at NAEPDC from February 1, 2006, until December 15, 2009. She was not authorized to sign checks on behalf of NAEPDC. In December 2009, during an initial review, the Executive Director of NAEPDC found a deficit of approximately \$70,000 in checks written against the organization. He reported the discrepancy in December 2009 to MPD's Check and Fraud Unit.

Records obtained by the MPD Check and Fraud Unit showed that Burns, on a very regular and repeated basis between January 7, 2008, and December 13, 2009, had forged the Executive Director's signature on numerous NAEPDC checks that fraudulently were written to Burns or to organizations to which Burns owed money for personal expenses.

The records also showed that Burns, on a very regular and repeated basis between May 12, 2006, and November 30, 2009, fraudulently caused numerous Automated Clearing House (ACH) debits to the checking account of NAEPDC to provide money to Burns or to organizations to which Burns owed money for personal expenses.

Burns cashed some of the fraudulent checks she received at various banks in the Washington, D.C., area and deposited others into her personal bank account. She also used funds from the monies she fraudulently obtained from NAEPDC for personal expenses, including money she spent on gambling in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and at Dover Downs in Delaware.

As a result of Burns's actions, NAEPDC suffered losses of approximately \$356,607.10.

In announcing today's guilty plea, U.S. Attorney Machen, Special Agent in Charge Irvine, and MPD Chief Lanier praised the hard work of the investigators involved in this matter, especially U.S. Secret Service Special Agent Kevin Rydalch and MPD Detective Richard Espinosa. They also acknowledged the efforts of Paralegal Specialist Mary Treanor, as well as Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel Butler, who prosecuted this matter.

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